

Johnnetta B. Cole, Ph.D.

Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

Johnnetta B. Cole, Ph.D., was appointed the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) in March, 2009. Founded as a small museum on Capitol Hill in 1964, NMAfA became a part of the Smithsonian Institution in 1979, and in 1987 it moved to its current location on the National Mall. The museum's collection of over 9,000 objects represents nearly every area of the continent of Africa and contains a variety of media and art forms. NMAfA also has an extensive education program. Since the mid-1980s, Dr. Cole has worked with a number of Smithsonian programs. She currently serves on the Scholarly Advisory Board for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, which will be completed on the National Mall by 2015.

Before assuming her current position, Dr. Cole had a long and distinguished career as an educator and humanitarian. Her work as a college professor and president, her published works, her speeches and her community service consistently address issues of racial, gender and all other forms of inequality.

Dr. Cole is president emerita of Bennett College for Women and Spelman College. She is the only individual to have served as the president of these two Historically Black Colleges for women in the United States. She is also professor emerita of Emory University from which she retired as Presidential Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Women's Studies and African American Studies.

After beginning her college studies at Fisk University and completing her undergraduate studies at Oberlin College, Dr. Cole earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Northwestern University. Dr. Cole made history in 1987 when she became the first African American woman to serve as president of Spelman College. At her inauguration, Drs. Bill and Camille Cosby donated \$20 million to the college; and during her presidency, Spelman was named the number one liberal arts college of the South. During her presidency at Bennett College for Women, an art gallery was opened and programs were initiated in women's studies and global studies.

Dr. Cole has conducted research in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States, and she has authored and edited several books and scores of scholarly articles. She is a fellow of the American Anthropological Association and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is also a member of the American Association of Museum Directors.

Dr. Cole has been awarded 55 honorary degrees and she is the recipient of numerous awards, including the TransAfrica Forum Global Public Service Award, the Radcliffe Medal, the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal, the 2001 Alexis de Tocqueville Award for Community Service from United Way of America, the Joseph Prize for Human Rights presented by the Anti-Defamation League, the Uncommon Height Award from the National Council of Negro Women, the John W. Gardner Leadership Award from the Independent Sector, and the Lenore and George W. Romney Citizen Volunteer Award from the Points of Light Foundation.

From 2004 to 2006, Dr. Cole was the chair of the board of United Way of America, the first African American to serve in that position. She has served on the corporate boards of Home Depot, Merck and Nation's Bank South. She was the first woman to serve on the board of Coca-Cola Enterprises. Dr. Cole currently chairs the board of the National Visionary Leadership Project, and she is a member of the board of TransAfrica Forum and the Johnnetta B. Cole Global Diversity and Inclusion Institute, and she is on the Advisory Committee of America's Promise. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, The Links, Inc. and the National Council of Negro Women.

Dr. Cole is married to James D. Staton, Jr. She is the mother of three sons, has three grandchildren, and is a mentor to many young women and men.



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Forty-Seventh Annual

Commencement



ST. THOMAS

Saturday, the Fourteenth of May
Two Thousand and Eleven
Seven O'Clock in the Evening
Sports and Fitness Center
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

ST. CROIX

Sunday, the Fifteenth of May
Two Thousand and Eleven
Half after Four O'Clock in the Afternoon
Campus Grounds
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands